



Timeline of Important Laws and Events Impacting Tribal Governments in Alaska

The Early Years

- **“Time Immemorial”**
- **1493** Papal Bull and the Rule of Discovery
 - Early epidemics of small pox, measles, flu across Alaska
- **1741** ‘Discovery’ of Alaska by Vitus Bering
- **1743** Russian commercial fur voyages to Alaska begin
- **1763** Unungan (Aleut) retaliation for Russian attacks and enslavement results in destruction and sinking of 4 Russian ships
- **1766** Tsarina Catherine declares Aleut/Alutiiq to be Russian subjects, in order to force them work for the Russian American Fur Company
- **1784** Shelikov assault on Refuge Rocks- Massacre marks the decline of Unungan independence.
- **1784** Russian colony started in 3 Saints Bay, Kodiak and begin expansion into SE
- **1794** Russian exploration into Copper region, expelled by Ahtna people
- **1802** Battle of Sitka~ Kiks.ádi Tlingit destroy Russian fort at Sitka
- **1824** First Russian-American Treaty, agreement between both nations to commercial fish and trade with Native people in Alaska
- **1848** Beginning of commercial whaling in Alaska (Yankee Whaling)
- **1855** Russian coal mine established in Cook Inlet
- **1865** Start of Survey of Overland Telegraph Route through Alaska
- **1865** Last shot of Civil War fired in Alaska, months after official end of US Civil War
- **1867** Treaty of Cession – Quit Claim purchase of Alaska by US
- **1867-1884** Department Era- Army, Treasury, Navy authority in Alaska
- **1867** Letter describing US Indian Policy in Alaska called for ‘vigilance in dealing with Tlingit, always have guns ready to fire, hold entire tribe responsible for crime of individual’
- **1869** Secretary of Interior Seward tours Alaska with military commander of Alaska, Gen. Jefferson Davis who reminds Sitka that ‘with only 2000 whites and 25,000 Indians in Alaska, a display of military force is needed.’ US Navy bombards and burns Kake and later the same year the Army bombards Wrangell
- **1870** Testimony to Congress expressing ‘dissatisfaction among the tribes...from the fact that (Alaska) was sold without their consent, arguing that their fathers originally owned all the country, but allowed the Russians to occupy it for their mutual benefit’ and that proceeds from a sale should have gone to Tribes
 - “The Tlingit do not like the idea of whites settling in their midst without being subject to their jurisdiction,” Gen. Davis reported in 1869
- **1871** Letter from Aleuts of St. George Island complaining of slavery under the federal governments leasing of the island to the American Fur Seal Company
- **1873** Sale and importation of alcohol in Alaska made illegal, declaring all of Alaska to be Indian Country for the purpose of that law
- **1875** Sale and importation of breech loading firearms in Alaska made illegal
- **1877** Administration of Alaska transferred from Dept. of War to Dept. of Treasury, citing the need for the Army in fighting the ‘Indian Wars’ in the lower 48
- **1878** Commercial fishing in Alaska. First salmon canneries been established and commercial Salmon Traps become widespread.
- **1879** Osprey Affair- White residents of Sitka (US) request help of British government because they felt the US was not protecting them from the Tlingit
- **1882** US Navy bombards and burns Angoon

- **1884** Alaska District Organic Act – creation of Alaska’s first civil government. Calls for Alaska Native ‘use and occupancy’ to be protected, for education without regards to race, and creation of Commission to report on needs of Alaska Native people
- **1887** General Allotment (Dawes) Act passed, never directly applied to Alaska, but signals a shift in US policy to take more Indian lands and assimilationist purpose reflected in future laws
- **1888** First Alaska Native children arrive at Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania (‘Kill the Indian, Save the Man’ was the school motto). Beginning of Boarding Schools
- **1889** President Harrison Inauguration address supports Allotment and Assimilation policy through the Dawes Act and says that it is ‘fortunate’ that the US has not extended reservation policy into Alaska
- **1889** US Congress passes first act limiting Native fishing in Alaska.
- **1890** Wounded Knee Massacre- After surrendering to the US Army a massacre ensued where more than 150 Lakota men, women, and children were killed. End of ‘Indian Wars’ in US
- **1890** Tlingit clan leaders send a letter to President Harrison, followed the next year by a petition to Congress asking for the protection of fishing and hunting areas
- **1891** Alaska Townsite Act- Allowed for non-Native ownership of townsites in Alaska
- **1891** Establishment of first Indian Reservation in Alaska, with over 150 reservations eventually formed, most with the express purpose of protecting subsistence resources
- **1898** Alaska Homestead Act- Allowed Non-Natives to own homesteads in Alaska
- **1898** Klondike Gold Rush over 100,000 people flood to the Yukon region searching for gold, with more to come to Nome and the Interior. Widespread commercial hunting (Market hunting) wipes out Native sources of food.
- **1898** Meeting of Tlingit Chiefs with Territorial Gov. Brady, who urges the Tlingit to reject the protections of federal Indian law, “You must decide for yourselves whether you want to be classed as aborigines like the wild men of the west”
- **1900** Pneumonia Epidemic, ‘The Great Sickness’ struck Aleutians and SW Alaska particularly hard with as many as ½ perishing
- **1900** “Carter Code” passed by Congress extended civil laws of Oregon to Alaska
- **1901** Valdez to Eagle Trail built by US Army
- **1902** 1st Alaska Game Law passed by Congress, does not limit Alaska Native hunting/fishing rights
- **1902** Oil discovered in Katalla (near mouth of Copper River) a city of 5000 with an oil refinery operated there until 1933
- **1903** St. Lawrence Island set aside as a Native Reservation in order to provide reindeer to prevent starvation.

The Middle Period

- **1905** Berrigan case- Judge Wickersham holds that Alaska Tribes hold title to their traditional lands as Aboriginal Title... but only way to enforce was thru individual lawsuit
- **1905** *Report to Congress on Conditions and Needs of Alaska Natives*, in noting that the “... rush of prospectors has literally **swept the country clean, denuding it of life...**leading to destitution and semi-starvation”, calls for modification of game laws and a moratorium on commercial fishing north of Aleutians, due to importance of Yukon and Kuskokwim fisheries to the interior, as well as the Copper River. (Never implemented)
- **1905** Creation of Tongass National Forest with no compensation to the Tlingit/Haida for Aboriginal Title
- **1905** Nelson Act- Segregation in Alaska. Territory schools only allow Native students if ‘civilized’ and no tribal ties. US Federal Govt takes over Native education.
- **1906** Letter from Chief Ivan and William (Tanana area) to US Secretary of War complaining of ‘troubles we are having with white people since 1898’. Focus is on hunting, fishing, commerce and justice
- **1906** Alaska Native Allotment Act. (1906-60 only 80 approved, 1960-80 apx. 10,000)
- **1907** Starvation relief provided by US Army at Copper Center (along military telegraph route)
- **1910** After being nearly commercially hunted to extinction, sea otter hunting is banned in Alaska by the Fur Seal Act

- **1912** First Native advocacy group in the state, Alaska Native Brotherhood, forms in Juneau
- **1913** Gold discovered on the Chisana river. That first winter more than 2000 Dall Sheep were killed the support the new miners
- **1914** 180 Commercial salmon traps operating in Southeast Alaska
- **1915** Territorial Act- Alaska's 1st legislators- Native Citizenship Act (modeled after Dawes Act)
- **1915** Wickersham meeting with Tanana area Chiefs
- **1916** Migratory Bird Treaty closes the harvest of migratory birds during the only season birds are in much of Alaska
- **1917** Chief Goodlataw files complaint that commercial fishing on Copper River is leading to continued starvation
- **1918** Worldwide Influenza Epidemic hits Alaska, End of WWI
- **1924** Indian Citizenship Act extended citizenship to Alaska Natives without terminating tribal rights/identity. Among other rights, includes the right to vote.
- **1924** The White Act prohibits Native set nets, in the name of conservation, while cannery traps were not limited. Widely criticized as discriminatory, even at the time.
- **1925** Alaska Voter Literacy Act passed by Territorial legislature, required literacy test as a way to limit Native voting. A similar literacy requirement was later enshrined in the Alaska Constitution
- **1925** Alaska Game Act creates 5 non-native Game Commission, imposed seasons and bag-limits on Alaska Native hunting. 1st limit on Native hunting/fishing rights, allowed for subsistence taking only when in 'absolute need'.
- **1926** Alaska Native Townsite Act- allowed for formation of Alaska Native townsites
- **1926** William Paul is the first Alaska Native elected to Territorial Legislature
- **1929** Alaska Native Brotherhood sues US in 1929 for taking of Tongass but loses, not a tribe. 1935 Act by Congress recognizes Tlingit-Haida allowing for suit. 1959 Tlingit-Haida win, 1968 US paid \$7.5 million
- **1930** Formation of Tetlin Indian Reserve, The land was placed under tribal jurisdiction: "... to promote the interests of the Natives... in restocking the country and protecting the fur bearing mammals."
- **1931** Alaska Native programs transferred from Bureau of Education to BIA
- **1936** Indian Reorganization Act (AK) – Expansion of reservations in Alaska
- **1942-1945** Unungan (Aleut) residents were removed from their homes on the Aleutian Chain and imprisoned in Internment camps in SE Alaska during WWII
- **1943** Venetie Reservation set aside 1.8 million acres, "to protect the Native community from Non-Native trappers"
- **1943** Karluk Reservation formed. USFWS opposed to creation of Native fishing reserves in Alaska and refused to enforce the reservation, *Grimes Packing* case holds that reservation can only be enforced through trespass action brought by Dept. of Justice. Failure of reservation policy in Alaska.
- **1945** Territorial legislature passes Alaska Anti-Discrimination Act. Legal segregation in Alaska ends. End of WWII
- **1957** Project Chariot proposed. The project entails using atomic explosions to create a harbor near Point Hope in northwest Alaska
- **1959** Tlingit-Haida win federal court case
- **1959** Alaska Statehood Act - State allowed to select 120 million acres of land
 - *"As a compact with the United States said State and its people do agree and declare that they forever disclaim all right and title to any lands or other property...(including fishing rights), the right or title to which may be held by any Indians, Eskimos, or Aleuts (hereinafter called natives) or is held by the United States in trust for said natives".*
- **1960** The Federal government transfers the authority to manage fish and wildlife in Alaska to the new State government. Uncompensated taking of aboriginal hunting and fishing rights. Fish Traps made illegal in Alaska.
- **1961** Barrow 'Duck-in', 138 people presented themselves for arrest for shooting ducks in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty. Leads to significant changes to Migratory Bird laws
- **1961** State starts selecting lands near villages in the Minto Flats and Wood-Tikchik area.

- **1962** Douglas Indian Village burned to the ground, to make room for new Douglas City harbor and park
- **1962** First issue of Tundra Times is published. This was a statewide Native paper reporting on issues of concern to the Native community.
- **1963** Rampart Canyon Dam proposed, raising protests by Yukon River villages
- **1964** State closes subsistence fishery at Batzulnetas (Katie John's Allotment) and nearly all other traditional fishing sites in the Upper Copper river.
- **1966** U.S. Interior Secretary Udall issues a preliminary injunction freezing land conveyances to the state, until Alaska Native land claims are settled.
- **1967** First Alaska Native Land Claims settlement bill is introduced in Congress by Sen. Jackson of Washington
- **1968** Oil discovered at Prudhoe Bay
- **1968** Tlingit-Haida awarded \$7.5 million for suit against the federal government

ANCSA to the Present

- **1971** Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) passed by Congress- Extinguished aboriginal land claim. Ended the Alaska Native Allotment Act. Formation of ANCSA Corporations
- **1973** "Limited Entry" restricting number of eligible fishermen passed Alaska legislature
- **1975** Voting Rights Act extended to Alaska due to long history of discrimination and literacy tests
- **1976** Federal Land Planning and Management Act ended Alaska Native Townsite Act
- **1976** Molly Hootch (Tobeluk v Lind) case is settled, requiring Alaska to build schools in rural Alaska. The Boarding School Era in Alaska, which began in 1888, soon comes to an end.
- **1978** Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) passed to stop widespread separation of Native children from their families. Specifically included Alaska Native villages.
- **1979** In Frank v State, Alaska Supreme Court rules that the US Constitution guarantee of free exercise of religion protects taking of moose for potlatch
- **1980** Congress passes Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), which protects the subsistence needs of rural Alaskans. It began as a Native Priority, but was changed to a 'Rural Priority' as a compromise between the federal government and the State of Alaska.
- **1987** Self -Governance demonstration project with CCHITA
- **1993** Federal recognition of 226, now 231 tribes in Alaska.
- **1993** Federal take-over of subsistence on federal lands across Alaska due to State non-compliance with ANILCA
- **1998-1999** Venetie Tax Case and John v. Baker- Tribal Sovereignty without territory
- **2001** Katie John Case -expands federal authority to include 'reserved waters'. Gov Knowles declines to appeal. 2005 Gov. Murkowski challenges rules implementing the ruling. Katie wins. 2010 Parnell appeals. 2014 US Supreme Court Rejects Alaska Appeal. Sturgeon case leaves Katie John decision intact.
- **2009** Secretary of the Interior announces the **failure** of the federal government in its legal obligation to protect Alaska Native subsistence and orders a comprehensive review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program
- **2013** Akiachak case and Land into Trust. Akiachak decision holds that it is unlawful to discriminate against Alaska Tribes. State of Alaska appeals, lost June 2016. State declines to appeal loss allowing tribes to place land into trust.
- **2017** Alaska Attorney General releases legal opinion, at the request of Gov. Walker, stating, "The law is clear. There are 229 Alaska Tribes and they are separate sovereigns with inherent sovereignty..."
- **2018** Alaska Land into Trust applications suspended by Asst. Secretary of Indian Affairs, Tara Sweeney (past ASRC CEO), pending review by Interior Department.